

# Department of Human Services

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## Articles in Today's Clips Friday, April 4, 2008

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## DPS Investigates Member Accused Of Child Neglect

### *Board Members Wants To Keep Colleague Away From Children*

POSTED: 6:47 pm EDT April 3, 2008  
UPDATED: 7:59 pm EDT April 3, 2008

**DETROIT, Mich.** -- A Detroit School Board member wants to keep her colleague, who faces child abuse and neglect accusations, away from children.

Reverend David Murray, a Detroit School Board member and leader of a church of 10 people, lost custody of his four children after allegations of abuse, neglect and domestic violence surfaced.

Thursday, school board member Marie Thorton told Local 4 she is introducing a resolution to the board because she is uncomfortable with the reverend having any contact with children.

Thorton told Local 4, "Even if he's innocent until proven guilty, we put the interest of the children first."

She also said, "Some documents indicate the children have a fear of school board member David Murray."

Thorton's resolution calls for Murray to not have any contact with Detroit Public School students while conducting school board business until the courts sort out his case.

Thorton said, "If the court saw fit to take the children out of the home, then I think the board has an obligation to protect the children as well."

The resolution also raises concerns that Murray's attorney is a hired vendor for the school district, creating a possible conflict of interest.

On March 20, the state's Childrens Protective Services took four children out of Murray's home. The state is seeking custody of two other teens, but Murray said they don't live with him.

Murray's wife, Tanisha Murray, 35, filed abuse and neglect complaints against Murray on Feb. 28.

Tanisha Murray admitted that the home in which they were living was not fit for children.

David Murray told Local 4 they are all false allegations and his main concern is his children and the children of Detroit.

A Children's Protective Service representative noted on a petition filed with the state that the home was observed to be dirty, with a foul odor. "Broken windows were observed throughout the home, and a large hole was observed in the living room ceiling."

One of Murray's sons, Joseph Murray, was present during the visit and told workers that he often slept on the floor, next to a broken window in the living room, and stated he does not have enough to eat.

"I love my wife and I love my children, and that's the most important thing in my life," said Murray.

DAvid Murray, 55, was present during the workers' visit to the home on the 18000 block of Oak Drive but told workers that he lives on the 19000 block of San Juan.

David Murray is the pastor of First Holy Temple Church of God in Christ and is a licensed social worker. He is also one of 11 Detroit School Board members who provide oversight for the operations of the school district, comprised of 105,000 students.

Tanisha Murray is a homemaker and admitted in the petition that she takes medication to treat bipolar disorder.

A petition filed by state protection workers with the Wayne County Juvenile Court Monday asked that six of Murray's children be made temporary wards of the state: A 2-year-old girl, boys ages 12, 13 and 16, and two 15-year old boys.

#### RELATED TO STORY



**Video: DPS Investigates Member Accused Of Child Neglect**

The petition states the 2-year-old is the child of Tanisha and David Murray and the 13-year-old boy is Tanisha Murray's child from a previous relationship. The other four boys were adopted through a state foster care system.

According to the petition, David Murray told the workers that one of the 15-year-olds is in a psychiatric facility, but he didn't know the name of the facility and he doesn't know where the other 15-year-old is.

The other children have been sent to live with family members.

Murray told Local 4, "It does not matter if I am the elected official or the mayor or governor. We all have challenges, and responsible people learn from challenges."

However, court records show the Murrays have an extensive history with Children's Protective Services and show a "pattern of neglect."

Tanisha Murray reported her 2-year-old daughter Julia weighs only 23 pounds because she was unable to feed her enough food.

A Wayne County Juvenile Court referee said Monday that there is enough evidence against David Murray to proceed to trial and a preliminary hearing on April 18 will determine whether the children will be made temporary wards of the state. If the state doesn't feel Murray is making improvements in his life, the state could terminate his parental rights.

A DPS representative told Local 4, "It's devastating whenever you think a child is in danger." The representative also said the Detroit School Board attorneys will be investigating the allegations.

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## Cadillac man held on multiple child abuse charges

By Rick Charmoli

LAKE CITY - A 24-year-old Cadillac man is in Missaukee County jail for his connection with a child abuse case.

Kyle Michael Rawson was arrested by the Cadillac Michigan State Police and arraigned Tuesday in 84th District Court on multiple child abuse charges stemming from incidents occurring on or between the dates of Dec. 20 and Jan. 9 in Norwich Township, Missaukee County.

Rawson was charged with three counts of child abuse first degree and one count of child abuse second degree. A habitual offender second offense was added, court records indicate.

An investigation was initiated based on Rawson's 7-month-old daughter being admitted to DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids with serious brain injuries and a broken rib in January, according to police. As a result of interviews and investigation with assistance from the Rockford Michigan State Police, Rawson admitted to causing the injuries.

If convicted of the three child abuse first degree charges, Rawson faces up to 15 years in prison for each individual charge. He also faces up to four years for the child abuse second degree charge. The habitual offender second offense charge has a penalty of one and one-half times the maximum sentence on the primary offense.

Bond was set at \$20,000 but he was being held without bond on a probation violation warrant as the result of a operating while intoxicated third offense conviction.

Rawson is scheduled to appear on the probation violation in 28th Circuit Court on Monday and a preliminary exam in 84th District Court has been scheduled for 2 p.m. on April 14.

rcharmoli@cadillacnews.com | 775-NEWS (6397)

# Ypsilanti man charged with abusing girlfriend's 8-week-old girl

April 3, 2008

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ANN ARBOR — An Ypsilanti man is jailed on charges of fracturing the skull of his girlfriend's 8-week-old daughter.

## ADVERTISEMENT

Darrick Reeves was arraigned Tuesday on first- and second-degree child abuse charges. The 21-year-old is being held in the Washtenaw County Jail on a \$25,000 bond.

Police say Reeves initially told police he tripped over a cat and fell with the infant in his arms, then said he dropped the baby onto a carpeted floor. They say he eventually admitted hitting the baby's head on a table after becoming frustrated with her crying.

Reeves was watching the baby while her mother was at work.

The Ann Arbor News says the baby is recovering at the University of Michigan Medical Center.

Jail officials say they don't have records showing whether Reeves has an attorney.

## Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080403/NEWS06/80403009>

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### **Girl's illness leads police to meth lab Mom's boyfriend sought after raid turns up meth-making equipment at home**

Friday, April 04, 2008

BY ROSEMARY PARKER

rparker@kalamazoogazette.com

388-2734

KALAMAZOO -- The hospitalization of a 4-year-old girl after her suspected exposure to methamphetamine lab fumes led the Kalamazoo Valley Enforcement Team to raid a Kalamazoo Township house on Thursday.

Ammonia odors in the house at 1015 Chicago Ave. were so strong they set off the officers' organic compound detectors, KVET Sgt. David Boysen said.

"When we walked in, it was so bad we couldn't stand it," Boysen said.

Inside the house, police said they found the girl's 25-year-old mother, an active meth lab and bottles, tubes and other lab components and chemicals.

Boysen said the girl, who lived at the house with her mother, 7-year-old brother, grandparents and the mother's 27-year old boyfriend, was sent to Bronson Methodist Hospital on Tuesday after her grandparents took her to a doctor's office for treatment of breathing difficulties.

She was listed in fair condition this morning at Bronson, a hospital official said. The girl's brother also was taken to Bronson by his father for examination, police said.

The girl's grandparents and brother were arriving home from visiting the hospital at about 1:30 p.m. Thursday when police arrived at the house. The mother told police the children had breathed fumes from meth that was being manufactured and used, and the boy had handled chemicals used to make the drug, Boysen said.

The mother said she had told the boyfriend to leave when she had found him cooking meth upon her return from work early Thursday morning. Police searched the home but didn't find him, Boysen said.

Boysen said the boy has not attended school for several days. He had been enrolled in Kalamazoo Public Schools, but the family was moving to Comstock Township, the mother told investigators.

The mother had recently posted \$500 bond to allow the boyfriend to get out of Kalamazoo County Jail, where he had been lodged for two months on a charge of meth possession, Boysen said.

Since his release, the grandparents told police, the man had manufactured the drug at night while they and the children slept. The grandmother believed closing the door and blocking the vents would be sufficient protection from the chemicals that filled the air, Boysen said.

"They (grandparents) said they were scared of this guy, that's one of the reasons they didn't report it," Boysen said. "They will be moving. They're trying to get away from this guy."

Boysen said the boyfriend, whom he identified as Jeremy Paul Adams, is wanted on a bench warrant for failing to appear in court on a charge of meth possession. Police were continuing to search for him this morning.

# Gorcyca faces discipline in Perry case

By John Wisely and L.L. Brasier • Free Press Staff Writers • April 4, 2008

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Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca faces potential professional discipline after the Michigan Attorney Grievance Commission filed a formal ethics complaint against him for his handling of the James Perry case.

## ADVERTISEMENT

The complaint says Gorcyca may have prejudiced the proceedings against former Oak Park kindergarten teacher by:

- Calling Perry “a freak” in an interview with the Detroit Free Press.
- Discussing in a radio interview on WJR evidence that had been excluded by the court.
- Issuing a press release noting that Perry declined to take a polygraph test, the results of which are not admissible in Michigan courts.

The actions constitute misconduct by “engaging in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice,” according to the complaint, which goes on to accuse Gorcyca of “engaging in conduct that is contrary to justice, ethics, honesty or good morals.”

“The standard is, would a reasonable person conclude that it (the conduct) had a substantial likelihood of prejudicing a proceeding,” said John Van Bolt, executive director of the Michigan Attorney Discipline Board.

Gorcyca did not respond to an email request seeking comment on the complaint.

Perry, 34, of Ferndale is charged with raping two boys in a special education classroom at Oak Park’s Key Elementary School in 2005.

A jury convicted him in September 2006, but trial Judge Denise Langford Morris threw out the conviction after new witnesses, never interviewed by police, emerged to dispute the prosecution’s theory of the case.

Perry’s retrial ended this week in a hung jury with 11 jurors voting to acquit and one seeking conviction. Gorcyca must decide whether to seek a third trial or drop the case.

He faces a May 28 hearing date with the Attorney Discipline Board, an arm of the State Supreme Court that hears cases against lawyers accused of misconduct.

A panel of three lawyers will hear the charges against Gorcyca and determine if he committed misconduct. If it finds Gorcyca guilty, it could order discipline ranging from a reprimand that is published publicly to disbarment.

Last year, the discipline board disbarred 17 lawyers, suspended 64 others and issued 40 reprimands. There are about 38,000 licensed lawyers in Michigan.

## Find this article at:

<http://www.freep.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080404/NEWS03/80404039>

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=Gorcyca+faces+discipline+in+Perry+case&e...> 4/4/2008



April 4, 2008

## State examining Oakland prosecutor's conduct in sex assault trial

### Midday update

*Associated Press*

PONTIAC - Oakland County Prosecutor David Gorcyca faces a professional misconduct probe in the first trial of a Ferndale man accused of sexually assaulting two boys.

The complaint from an investigative arm of the state Supreme Court comes as James Perry's second trial ended Tuesday in a mistrial. The former kindergarten teacher was found guilty in September 2006, but that verdict was tossed out last year.

Perry repeatedly has denied any wrongdoing.

The complaint pertains to comments Gorcyca made to the media describing Perry as a pedophile, potentially jeopardizing the trial.

Gorcyca on Thursday told The Detroit News he looks forward to defending all the actions and statements of his office.

He has 21 days to respond before the Attorney Discipline Board schedules a public hearing.

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# Child abuse victims honored

By **DOMINIC ADAMS** Contributing Writer  
 Thursday, April 3, 2008 10:29 AM EDT

OWOSSO - Rhonda Ihm spent almost an hour playing with a 3-year-old girl Tuesday morning at the Child Advocacy Center.

Ihm's coloring and use of Play-Doh with the toddler may allow the victim an avenue for coping with a very traumatizing experience.

As a forensic interviewer, Ihm takes time getting to know each child she encounters at the CAC before asking about any abusive acts the child may have encountered.

"They walk in and see that it's a friendly place," Ihm said "That child's not just going to walk into the room and tell a stranger what's going on."

Ihm and others associated with CAC and Owosso's Relief After Violent Encounter, Inc., dedicated a living memorial to honor child survivors of sexual abuse and their supporters.

The memorial - a purple smokebush tree - is surrounded by hundreds of blue ribbons at the CAC, 1216 W. Main St. The blue ribbons represent the 500-plus children interviewed at the CAC since it opened in 2005.

Child abuse victims could recount abusive events with up to 13 adults prior to the CAC, Executive Director Ellen Lynch said.

Now Ihm interviews the child, while a team comprised of police, prosecutors, child protective service agents and other counselors watch from a

"We want only one interview for that child so they will not feel revictimized," Lynch said. "Sometimes by the time the child would (testify in court) that child would be emotionless."

The dedication marks the kickoff of Child Abuse Prevention and Awareness Month in Michigan.

RAVE provided the tree, which Simpson's Greenhouse donated.

"We wanted the community to see that we're working with the CAC to build that relationship with victims," said Amanda Dubey, sexual assault t good to have that neutral person. We try to do creative things to get them talking and give them ways of coping."

In 2006, authorities investigated 1,469 child abuse and neglect cases in Shiawassee County.

The CAC is a program of the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Shiawassee County in partnership with Shiawassee-Owosso Kiwanis Club. Its which is funded through grants and other donations. All child abuse interviews must happen at the CAC, Lynch said.

Lynch said there have been 20 interviews per month in 2008.

"Without community support we wouldn't get funded," Lynch said.

For more information about the CAC and its child abuse prevention and awareness month events, visit its Web site at [www.childabusepreven](http://www.childabusepreven)

April also is Sexual Assault Awareness Month.



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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Home Day Care Investigated For Child Abuse

POSTED: 4:22 pm EDT April 3, 2008  
UPDATED: 7:33 pm EDT April 3, 2008

**CLINTON TOWNSHIP, Mich.** -- The Michigan Department of Human Services has suspended the day care license of a Clinton Township woman while police investigate a complaint of child abuse.

The abuse complaint was filed by St. John Hospital after a 7-month-old was brought to the hospital with head injuries. The child's parents picked the child up from the day care center after the operator called and said the child was not feeling well.

The child did not sustain life-threatening injuries.

The case led doctors and police to investigate Shannon Jacob, the day care provider.

Jacob refused to comment when asked about the case.

Jacob's license suspension to care for up to 12 children out of her home on the 24000 block of Kolleen Lane, near Interstate 94, went into effect as of 6 p.m. April 2.

Jacob must tell her other clients her license has been suspended and she can no longer provide care.

Jacob has had a license to operate a group child care home since Oct. 27, 2004.

She has hired high-profile attorney Stephen Rabaut, who also represented convicted murderer Stephen Grant.

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### RELATED TO STORY



**Video: Day Care Operator Investigated After Child Injured**



## Muskegon Chronicle

### Inspection after baby's death results in license loss

Friday, April 04, 2008

#### FROM LOCAL REPORTS

FRUITPORT TWP. -- A woman had her group day care home license revoked this week by state officials after an inspection prompted by the death of a three-month-old baby there last week.

Amy German, of 2322 Stevens Creek, received a "summary suspension" of her license from the Michigan Department of Human Services, Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing after violations were discovered during a recent investigation of a complaint at her home. According to the DHS Web site, her license was subsequently revoked.

The investigation found there were violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules in supervision, caregiver responsibilities, infant sleeping and training, according to a Michigan Department of Human Services news release.

On March 27, the Fruitport Township Fire Department responded to a medical emergency at the German home in the late afternoon.

Police Chief Paul Smutz said a three-month-old boy died and his investigator determined "there was nothing to show that the death was suspicious."

Although toxicology results from an autopsy still are pending, Smutz said the death is believed to have been from natural causes.

Fruitport Township notified the DHS "as a matter of protocol because it was a day care facility," Smutz said.

A phone call to German was not returned. Also listed as a resident of the home is Robert German Jr., a member of the Fruitport Community Schools board.

The license action prohibits her from operating a day care at the Stevens Creek address or any other address or location.

Colleen Steinman, a spokeswoman for the department, said she could not "go into any detail" on the case.

German was originally licensed Aug. 18, 2004, to operate a group day care home. The license was for 12 children. The license was renewed March 7, 2007, according to the Department of Human Services Web site.

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# Report: Day care closed after child found dead

Fri, Apr 4, 2008

FRUITPORT TOWNSHIP — A Fruitport-area group home day care has been closed after a child was found dead there last week, WZZM-TV reported Thursday.

The state day care license for Amy German, 2322 Stevens Creek Court, was suspended Tuesday after a Michigan Department of Human Services investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules "regarding supervision, caregiver responsibilities, infant sleeping and training."

The state department's Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing said it took the "emergency action to protect the health, welfare and safety of children."

The order also required German to inform all of the parents with children in her care that her license has been suspended, and the Fruitport Township woman was notified that the state bureau intends to revoke her license.

German has held a license to operate a group day care home for up to 12 children since August 2004.



## Man charged with assaulting girlfriend

### FROM STAFF REPORTS

—

TRAVERSE CITY -- An Omena man who allegedly threatened to kill his girlfriend faces assault charges.

Robert Arthur Nugent, 40, is charged with assault with a dangerous weapon, court records show. A preliminary examination is set for April 11.

Nugent, a self-employed construction worker and welder, allegedly assaulted his girlfriend by choking her, holding a knife to her throat and threatening to kill her late last month.

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Detroit Free Press

Oakland County news briefs

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APRIL 4, 2008

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## **PONTIAC: Shelter is in need of toilet paper**

**A homeless shelter's supply of toilet paper is, well, wiped out.**

And now, the Grace Centers of Hope -- which normally asks for donations of food and clothing -- is asking the public to give toilet paper. On Thursday, staffers armed with leftover holiday gift cards bought enough tissue to last a few days, said Michelle Atwell, the shelter's director of development.

Officials noticed Wednesday that supplies were getting low. Atwell said it appears donations of toilet paper have been slowing. About 35 rolls of toilet paper are used daily, shelter officials said.

Supplies come entirely from donations, Atwell said.

"We would just like the community to think about us as they are doing their grocery shopping or running their errands and purchase a case or package of toilet paper for Grace Centers of Hope," Pastor Kent Clark, chief executive officer of the shelter, said in a statement. "Toilet paper is just one of those unmentionables that we cannot do without."

About 150 men, women and children are serviced by the shelter daily.

Donations of toilet paper, cash or gift cards can be dropped off at 35 E. Huron St. in Pontiac. Cash donations also can be made at the shelter's Web site, [www.gracecentersofhope.org](http://www.gracecentersofhope.org)

For more information, call 248-334-2187 ext. 35, anytime.

# Medicaid faces chopping block for 19, 20-year olds

Posted by [Whitney Lloyd | Capital News Service](#) April 04, 2008 11:29AM

LANSING - Flying high is how aviation student Peter Ruei chooses to live his life. Doing so with no safety net is not his choice, but it is his fate.

A native of southern Sudan, Ruei came to Michigan at age 13 with the help of a Christian missionary agency. He brought with him little more than his brother and a cousin - both as alone in the world as he.

Together, they were placed in a Grand Rapids-area foster home. There they found themselves cocooned in a safety net of family that they'd never known and that's often elusive within the foster care system.

Wrapped in that environment, Ruei and his little family blossomed.

He graduated from Kenowa Hills High School in 2005 and is now studying to be a pilot at Western Michigan University. His cousin is a master's student at Central Michigan University.

They are foster care success stories - young people presented as proof the system works.

But at the same time, they are young adults who aged out of the system and again find themselves alone - hurtling through life with a threadbare safety net of government assistance programs that may soon get even thinner.

The state Senate has proposed removing 18,000 19- and 20-year olds from Medicaid - a group that falls outside federally mandated coverage.

Supporters of the move say it will save \$14.5 million a year, but a chorus of human service advocates claim it will leave young people vulnerable to chronic and life-threatening illnesses, drive up taxpayers' health care costs and disproportionately hurt former foster children.

The Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health - chaired by Sen. Roger Kahn, a Saginaw Republican and cardiologist - passed the proposal.

As a doctor, Kahn said it was a difficult decision, but "19- and 20-year olds tend to be one of our healthiest populations. Removing them from Medicaid allows us to redirect that \$14.5 million to other priorities like traumatic brain injury studies and community health programs and give direct care workers their first wage increase this century."

He added that Gov. Jennifer Granholm initially proposed removing the group in 2005.

Sitting on the same subcommittee, Sen. Deb Cherry, D-Burton, doesn't see the benefits Kahn sees, said Angela Clock, Cherry's legislative assistant.

"Yeah, the \$14.4 million is a big chunk of change, but to not fund any sort of health care program for these kids? In the long run, it won't save any money," Clock said.

For Jan Hudson, a senior planning and research associate at the Michigan League for Human Services, this debate between health care and the bottom line is nothing new.

She's seen these 19- and 20-year olds on the chopping block before and attributes their low profile to the repeated legislative efforts to remove them from Medicaid.

"This is a familiar story. There are not a lot of lobbyists in Lansing lobbying for this group," she said. "If they tried to eliminate elderly or disabled people from Medicaid, you'd have lots of people down at the Capitol in wheelchairs, and they just couldn't get away with it."

The Department of Community Health (DCH), which administers Medicaid, hopes lawmakers won't pass it this time either.

"We're talking about health, about people who need health care and that's just not worth any amount of money that the state thinks it might save," James McCurtis of DCH said.

Budget hearings on the matter begin in April in the House Subcommittee on Community Health.



Chair Gary McDowell, D-Rudyard, said "It would be a huge step backward. We're trying to provide health care to all of our citizens, and removing people from Medicaid isn't the way to do it."

Back on campus at Western, Ruei offers advice for lawmakers grappling with the decision.

"I know Michigan isn't well-off right now, but taking all health benefits away from young people? It's too early for us to face even more challenges every day," he said. "It just looks like a big controversy between young people and the lawmakers."

MIRS

April 2, 2008

## Freeman: Health Care Proposal On Schedule

The effort to constitutionally mandate that the Legislature create a plan that gives every Michigan citizen health care coverage is "on schedule" to gather the required signatures to put the issue on the November 2008 ballot, organizer John **FREEMAN** wrote today.

Participating on a live web-based Q&A session hosted by *Michigan Liberal.com*, Freeman said he and his supporters have found a "very positive" response in terms of people signing the petition.

Freeman, a former House member, said he is relying on volunteers to collect the signatures as well as employees of a signature-gathering firm that will be paid with money raised as part of the campaign.

Catholics for the Common Good, SEIU and MichUHcan are among those groups passing around petitions.

"This makes sense, because healthcare is the number one concern in Michigan and around the country,"

Freeman wrote. "People are scared to death of losing their health insurance and they want to see action

taken to strengthen the system. And this is what this campaign is about, driving a serious conversation with the State Legislature about how we can strengthen the health care system."

The Healthcare for Michigan (HFM) proposal (See "**Healthcare Entitlement Bid Under Way**," 1/8/08)

was launched earlier this year.

Asked to respond to Detroit Medical Center CEO Mike **DUGGAN's** observations in Tuesday's edition of

*MIRS* that Freeman's initiative wasn't "specific enough to be a positive contribution to the problem",

Freeman said his approach was chosen because consensus on healthcare reform has proven difficult (See

"**Duggan: Universal Health Care 'Inevitable'**," 4/1/08).

"We deliberately chose a strategy of not pushing specific reforms because we understand that all the key stakeholders need to come together to enact healthcare reforms," Freeman said. "By pushing a constitutional amendment that inserts healthcare as primary concern of this state, we are establishing a framework from which we all can come together to craft and then implement healthcare improvements. "There will be ample opportunity for Mike Duggan and other healthcare providers to weigh in on what the appropriate healthcare reforms ought to be.



## Dwindling donations, rising costs hurt food banks

Friday, April 04, 2008

**By Ted Roelofs**

**The Grand Rapids Press**

GRAND RAPIDS -- Once a month, Grand Rapids resident Cynthia Taylor stops in at Mel Trotter Ministries for a box of food. With that, food from another pantry and \$10 in food stamps, she scrapes by.

"I depend on it entirely. I really do," said Taylor, 48, who lives nearby on a fixed income.

But she considers herself lucky, compared to some of those she encounters in the Heartside neighborhood.

"It'll break your heart," Taylor said. "They are so, sort of like, desperate."

As demand for food deepens throughout the area, some pantries are being forced to tighten their belts just as need reaches historic levels.

At Mel Trotter, 225 Commerce Ave. SW, a 16 percent drop in food donations is forcing its pantry to turn away some families. The Senior Meals on Wheels Pantry in Grand Rapids will close for a week next week because it doesn't have enough food or money to buy it.

"We are turning away approximately 10 to 15 families per day," the Rev. Chico Daniels, president of Mel Trotter, said at a Thursday press conference at the Grand Rapids Police Department. The ministry launched an impromptu food drive to restock shelves for food donations.

"It's scaring me," said Linda Quist, associate director of Senior Meals. "What do you do? Do you keep cutting? Then, are you even fulfilling your mission?"

Her fears are understandable.

A steady loss in manufacturing jobs in recent years has put one in eight Michigan residents on food stamps, double the caseload in 2000 and a record high. In Kent County, it jumped from 25,770 recipients in 2000 to nearly 70,000 in February.

At the same time, rising gas, food and utility prices and, in some cases, dwindling donations, are making things tougher for the food pantries geared to fill the void.

At the North Kent Service Center, a food pantry north of Rockford, executive director Sandy Waite isn't sure how much longer it can keep pace with record demand.

"We may be able to get through one more month," Waite said.

In 2004, Waite said, the pantry served 1,500 families. Now it serves 4,000.

But with just \$30,000 left in its contingency fund and a \$400,000 budget that depends mostly on donations, Waite said the pantry may be forced to cut hours.

"It's not so much the food, but just having the ability to pay the bills, to have the small staff we have here and keep the lights on. It's killing us."

Marsha DeHollander, program director for the All County Churches Emergency Support System, a network of 100 Kent County food pantries, said pantries nationwide are hearing the same thing.

"People come and say, 'I used to give at the food drive and, now, I am here at the pantry,'" DeHollander said.

The network serves more than 6,500 households a month, compared to 5,600 in 2005.

"People are using up their resources," she said. "Now, we are dealing with people about to lose their homes."

DeHollander said the network is holding together, though the strain is starting to show.

"We may not always be able to give out as much food or the quality or quantity that we want," she said. "We are people of faith. We pray a lot."

At Senior Meals, associate director Quist finds herself thinking about numbers that don't go away.

Their diesel food truck gets 6 miles per gallon. Diesel fuel costs \$4.20 a gallon. A trip to Second Harvest Gleaners Food Bank of West Michigan to pick up food is nearly 30 miles round trip.

Every dollar spent on gas or other expenses takes away from the amount that can be spent on food to be given away.

"Five years ago, our pantry was fulfilling the need for food. We're not doing that now," Quist said.

Mel Trotter's Daniels said they do what they can.

"Speaking with another pastor in the area, he was saying the recession is real," Daniels said. "People are leaving this area because of lack of jobs."

But if the recession is real, that also means businesses are suffering, which hits charities that depend on their donations.

"Businesses are giving less," Daniels said.

"Some of our historical suppliers are giving less. They are going through some belt-tightening measures themselves.

"Individual families are giving less," he said. "Some of them are coming down to the mission themselves."

-- Press writer Matt VandeBunte contributed to this story.

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Article published Apr 4, 2008

Higher grocery costs drive more to food banks

**Justin A. Hinkley**

*The Enquirer*

The \$400 to \$500 Sherri Ashley spends monthly on groceries is getting her a lot less these days, she said.

Ashley, 50, of Battle Creek is one of millions of Americans who've changed their eating habits in the face of the biggest food inflation in 20 years.

"I used to spend that and fill the freezer, and we'd have some left over," Ashley said as she shopped Thursday at Bailey Park Thriftway with her granddaughter, Amari Ashley, 5. "Now there's never any leftovers, if we make it through the month."

Staples such as bread, milk, lettuce and eggs cost as much as 50 percent more now than two years ago, driven up by record-high energy, corn and wheat prices. Overall, the costs for groceries rose 5 percent in 2007, and the Arlington, Va.-based Food Marketing Institute said people across the country are bargain-shopping more and dining out less.

The cost of a loaf of bread has increased 32 percent since January 2005, to its current \$1.32 average. Eggs have increased almost 50 percent in the past year to an average \$2.17.

A family of four, shopping moderately, spends an average \$904 per month on groceries, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That's \$80 more than in 2006.

More and more people are seeking help at food banks to fill out their thinning cupboards. America's Harvest, which distributes to 200 food banks around the country, said its client load increased 20 percent at the end of 2007.

Industry analysts say high prices are here to stay.

"I'm definitely buying cheaper," Ashley said. "Buying hamburger instead of ground beef, not really getting steak. I'm buying more meat and fresh vegetables because it's easier to make those stretch. And of course I can't afford name brands.

"I used to go to a lot of different stores to try to shop sales and things like that," she added. "But with the cost of gas, that gets hard, too."

Battle Creek's Keona Hoover, 26, said she's spending about \$170 per grocery trip now, when she used to drop \$70 or \$80 at the register. With two kids at home, she said she doesn't think she can buy any less food, but has a hard time with the rising costs.

"My kids' appetites is big, after school," Hoover said. "It's getting tough."

Hoover said she tries to find bargains, but even discount grocery stores such as Save-A-Lot are raising prices.

"The stores where food's priced low doesn't mean anymore you're going to spend less there," Hoover said. "You just have to budget."

As consumers seek bargains, they've turned away from local grocers and turning to super centers, such as Meijer and Wal-Mart. The smaller local grocers already struggle to compete.

Hardial Singh, owner of Wattles Park Grocery in Emmett Township, said he's watched his business steadily decline the past three years.

"The smaller stores are getting pinched out," Singh said. "That's always been the case, but now because of the economy, everybody's sitting on their pennies."

Customers have always favored his store for small, last-minute items, Singh said, but lately, many have been avoiding spending those extra few dollars.

To help keep his costs competitive with the larger stores, Singh's gone from four employees down to two and puts in at least 10 hours a day, six days a week, himself. He makes a point of getting to know his customers because personal service is one of the only ways he can compete.

He named gas as the chief culprit behind the rising prices.

"Everything goes up with gas," he said. "In the last three years, prices have hiked up 20 percent. That's everything, from A to Z; it's not just one thing.

"People just have to cut down on the things they do."

*The Associated Press contributed to this report. Justin A. Hinkley can be reached at 966-0698 or [jhinkley@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:jhinkley@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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# Salvation Army, Food Bank of Eastern Michigan plan pantry in northern Genesee County, need volunteers

by Holly Klaft | The Flint Journal

**Thursday April 03, 2008, 9:20 PM**

MT. MORRIS TWP., Michigan -- Two of Genesee County's largest nonprofits are hoping other local agencies will join their effort to keep families fed by volunteering at a new pantry and food distribution center.

## **Join the effort**

- Organizations interested in volunteering at the proposed Coldwater Road pantry and distribution center can attend an informational meeting at 8:30 a.m. Thursday at the Salvation Army Beecher Corps, 1475 W. Coldwater Road.
- Attendees are asked to RSVP by the end of the day today by calling (810) 232-2196.

The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan and the Salvation Army are seeking partnerships with area pantries and churches interested in helping to staff the proposed \$1.5 million center.

Volunteers would receive food and other items from the food bank to stock their pantry shelves in exchange for donating a few hours a month to running the facility or sorting items in the warehouse.

An informational meeting about the proposed facility for local agencies that help the hungry is 8:30 a.m. Thursday at the Salvation Army Beecher Corps, 1475 W. Coldwater Road. The food bank and Salvation Army also hope to enlist volunteers to help oversee operations of the facility.

More than 200 local organizations were asked to attend, but the meeting is open to anyone who assists needy residents, said Salvation Army Capt. John Williams.

## **To donate**



- Those interested in making a donation for the new center can call (810) 232-2196 or mail donations to the Salvation Army 211 W. Kearsley St., Flint MI 48502.

"We're asking them to consider another outlet for their volunteer services and we'll credit them with food for that," said Williams, who has spearheaded efforts to build the facility.

Food bank officials have said the planned distribution center is greatly needed in north Genesee County, where the agency distributed about 1.3 million pounds of food last year.

"It's still in the infancy stages, but we're getting more and more excited about it," said food bank President Bill Kerr. "I think it's going to become a reality and it's going to be a wonderful thing for northern Genesee County." The 10,700 square-foot center, which would be a joint venture between the Salvation Army and food bank, is planned to be located near the Salvation Army's Coldwater Road pantry.

It would be another needed option for hungry families, said Ramona Jones, an administrator at Power of God Ministries in Mt. Morris Township, who plans to attend Thursday's meeting.

"We have such huge turnouts," she said of the organization's tri-annual food distribution days. "We get calls all the time from people needing food." The proposed facility would include a community gathering area, an 8,000 square-foot distribution warehouse and a grocery store-style pantry with refrigeration and freezer space that would give residents the freedom to choose their own items.

"The whole back wall of this pantry will be nothing but glass doors with access to meat products and frozen dinners," Williams said. "It will look just like the inside of a 7-11 or a Quik Stop."

Residents who enter the pantry also could be greeted with small samples of foods that are stored on its shelves, Williams said.

"We'd like to make the whole experience in the pantry seem like a grocery store environment," he said. "It's more than just having a choice. It's treating people with that dignity."

Williams said he also hopes to add a kitchen area to the community room that would be used for nutrition classes or to teach residents how to cook with items found in the pantry.

He hopes to keep the facility open Monday through Saturday and serve about 4,000 families a month.

Lorna Banks, a pantry volunteer at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Flint, said she's eager to hear about plans for the facility and volunteering at it.

"I'm very curious about it," Banks said. "I have questions about what it entails. It definitely would be worth it."

The Salvation Army has secured about one-third of the funding needed to build the center, Williams said. He anticipates it could take another year to raise the rest of the money needed to start building, but said he's optimistic plans will come to fruition.

"We're looking forward to going full steam ahead," Kerr said.

MIRS

April 2, 2008

## **Food Stamps Up, Public Assistance Down**

The number of Michiganders on food assistance continues to rise, with almost 573,000 cases in the fourth quarter of 2007 — a 5 percent jump over the year.

There was mostly bleak news in the Michigan League of Human Services' (MLHS) Economic Security

Index released today. It shows Isabella County sported the biggest increase in food assistance claims —

24 percent — followed by Ostego County at 13.3 percent and Washtenaw County at 12.5 percent.

Only three of Michigan's 83 counties saw decreases — Mackinac County at -3.6 percent, Keweenaw

County at -1.5 percent and Oceana County at -.2 percent.

Family Independence cases peaked in the first quarter of 2007 with almost 89,000 cases. In the last

quarter, they dropped to about 82,000. The MLHS said that's due in part to the requirement that

recipients prove citizenship. Many citizens are finding it hard to prove both their identity and citizenship

because they do not have the necessary documents (passport or birth certificate, for example) or they

don't have the means to purchase the copies, the nonprofit said.

Michigan lost 80,000 jobs from the fourth quarter of 2006 through the fourth quarter of 2007.

Unemployment increased to 7 percent from 6.5 percent during the same period. MLHS attributes that to declines in auto industry jobs.

In the last quarter of 2007, Montmorency County had the highest unemployment rate at 12.7 percent,

followed by Baraga County at 12.5 percent and Keweenaw County had 12.1 percent.

Washtenaw had the lowest at 4.7 percent, followed by Eaton and Cass counties tied at 4.9 percent.



# The News-Herald

*A Heritage Newspaper*

## Students spend time battling hunger

By Jackie Harrison-Martin  
, The News-Herald

WOODHAVEN — The majority of fourth- and fifth-graders at Bates Elementary School don't know what it's like to go without adequate food on a daily basis.

Nevertheless, more than 60 of them made it their business to help those who do.

The students, along with parents and members of the Kiwanis Club of Woodhaven, recently traveled to Whitmore Lake Middle School to participated in a Kids Against Hunger event.

They teamed with students and volunteers from that school and more than 15,000 meals were packaged for those less fortunate.

Food-packaging satellite stations are set up in various parts of the country with volunteers packaging specially formulated rice-soy casserole meals.

Bates and Whitmore Lake students created an assembly line with seven stations that took on different responsibilities to get the meals ready.

There was a station to put in the rice, soy, flaked vegetables, powdered chicken, weigh the package and then seal it.

"They were moving for two hours," said Paul Elsey, Bates' principal. "They didn't want to take a break. I was shocked at how much attention they paid to detail. They made sure everything was absolutely perfect."

The meals were developed by some of the world's leading scientists and have to be made precisely to instruction. Each package provides six nutritionally complete servings to feed starving children around the world, as well as the hungry in Michigan, for the cost of about 23 cents per serving.

Elsey said he heard about the middle school doing the service activity and called and asked if Bates could join in. Because Bates was bringing such a large volunteer work force, Elsey knew the school would be more than happy to boost the production.

Along with the students, Elsey said he was proud to see five of the school's teachers volunteer their time to make the trip.

The students also had an opportunity to try the meals for themselves. They are prepared by placing the package in boiling water for a short time, and then serving.

"They liked it, but said it needed some seasoning," Elsey said.

Kids Against Hunger sent half of the meals packaged overseas to be distributed. Elsey said 25 percent of the meals will be distributed in Michigan and the other 25 percent will be stored and used in case of a national emergency, such as happened during Hurricane Katrina.

Kids Against Hunger has delivered meals to families in more than 40 countries.

The program has a network of students assisting in packaging food in 30 satellite locations in the United States.

It cost about \$3,500 for supplies just to put the meals packaged by the two schools together.

<http://www.thenewsherald.com/cgi-bin/printme.pl>

4/4/2008

Donations from school Supt. Barbara Lott, along with the participants, Bates' Parent-Teacher Organization and the Kiwanis Club helped launch the event.

Click here to return to story:

[http://www.thenewsherald.com/stories/040408/loc\\_20080404005.shtml](http://www.thenewsherald.com/stories/040408/loc_20080404005.shtml)

Michigan Report

April 3, 2008

## **NEW D.H.S. PROGRAM AIMED AT INCREASING SELF-SUFFICIENCY BY UPPING VOTER PARTICIPATION**

Not only is the Department of Human Services implementing jobs programs and extended benefits plans - both intended to move people toward self-sufficiency - the department is also ramping up its efforts to get clients to vote, telling a Congressional panel on Tuesday that civil engagement is a necessary component in getting people invested in their own well being. Speaking before the U.S. House of Representatives Elections Subcommittee this week, Catherine Truss, DHS civic engagement project manager, said the department has pegged employees at each of its 120 branch offices to provide help with voter registration to encourage self-governance. Maureen Sorbet, spokesperson for DHS, didn't have figures as of Thursday for how much the efforts are expected to cost.

"Voting is a critical way to have a voice in the very decisions that directly impact people living in poverty," Ms. Truss said. "By providing and accepting voter registration applications we empower people who often have been disenfranchised."

The staff members who will play a role in getting clients registered will receive training to do so and will be provided outreach materials such as posters. Voter registration applications are available in English and Spanish languages and can be completed by anyone visiting a Michigan DHS office. "Compliance with the National Voter Registration Act is not just another federal mandate," DHS Director Ismael Ahmed said. "It is a key component for empowering families to become equipped to act on their own behalf and to take part in public debate. Not only is this an essential component of an individual family's movement toward self-sufficiency, it is also absolutely necessary if we hope to develop our democracy."

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Employers look for 'Alarm Clock 101'

*Friday, April 4, 2008 10:02 AM EDT*

Most of the 20,000 jobseekers who visit the local tri-county Michigan Works offices each year are work-ready.

They just need to search for jobs, use the computers or spruce up their resumes.

Other jobseekers have significant barriers to employment, which sometimes require the help of career development professionals.

The Jobs, Education and Training program, or JET, is one of more than a dozen programs administered by the non-profit workforce development organization.

JET is an intensive, 180-day curriculum. The goal is to provide training to chronically unemployed jobseekers and transition them into re-employment.

"We take several approaches to prepare JET students for the workplace," explains Todd Gustafson, executive director. "We create personal development plans based on a jobseeker's skills and interests. We teach them about customer service and other soft skills and we've also begun connecting jobseekers with volunteer opportunities so they can build their skills and learn to navigate a workplace environment while they contribute to their communities."

The program also addresses barriers to employment such as lack of transportation and inadequate clothing and materials.

Currently there are 790 Berrien, Cass and Van Buren county residents enrolled in the JET program.

The program contributes to overall economic health and business development, according to Gustafson.

"Although businesses are facing a shortage of technical skills within the local labor pool, most employers tell us the most important quality they look for in an applicant is knowing 'Alarm Clock 101.' They need employees who show up on time, every day, and can get along with their peers. JET addresses those core workplace-readiness issues.

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm and the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth (DLEG) April 2 awarded \$357,019 in temporary assistance for needy families funding to five Michigan Works agencies.

"This additional funding will help more Michigan citizens get the training they need to get good-paying jobs," Granholm said. "These services play an important role in helping workers with the education and skills they need to become financially independent."

Funding for the JET Program is provided by the State of Michigan and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.